

If England was bankrupt, France was not rolling in wealth, in the middle of the Hundred Years' War. Though the recovery of the sea by the English was impossible in the face of the allied French and Spanish fleets, and though the coasts were at the mercy of the enemy, there was probably no serious danger that hostile armies would force their way into the heart of the country. The furthest place inland which they ever reached was Lewes.

Within a fortnight of their issuing this order to the Mayor of Oxford, the governors of England had come to terms with John of Gaunt. It was a great confession of weakness and a great triumph for the Duke. A Council, elected and supported by Parliament, and presided over by his bitterest enemies, was obliged to allow that it could not carry on the war without him. He was not a great general ; he was not playing Marlborough to their Harley and St. John. But he commanded such resources in men and money that his aid was indispensable to the kingdom in time of war, in spite of his unpopularity and his many powerful enemies. Before the end of February the Council had selected him to command an expedition to St. Malo. He accepted the post, but on his own conditions.¹ So passed away another phase in political history. The attempt made by the rivals of the great Duke to govern the country without his participation had ended in failure, and he recovered, if not his old supremacy, at least some share of power. But during these first six months of Richard's reign another and a more interesting series of events had been taking place. Church and State had again come into conflict.

The position and prestige *of* the Papacy when it first came across the path of Wycliffe in the summer and autumn of 1377 were of a very peculiar kind, arising from events that had astonished Europe between seventy and eighty years back. Philip the Fair, the most powerful of the mediaeval kings of France, who ruled in glory before the English came to divide and impoverish the kingdom, had entered into conflict with

¹ Wals., i. 367.